No 644 January 13, 2002

THE FUNDAY TIMES

I'm a survivor

Meet the animals that are struggling to escape from the Australian fires

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Another world

Find out about the life of Walt Disney, and how he created theme parks

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What's up?

Kaci talks about life as an international pop star and her funny new video

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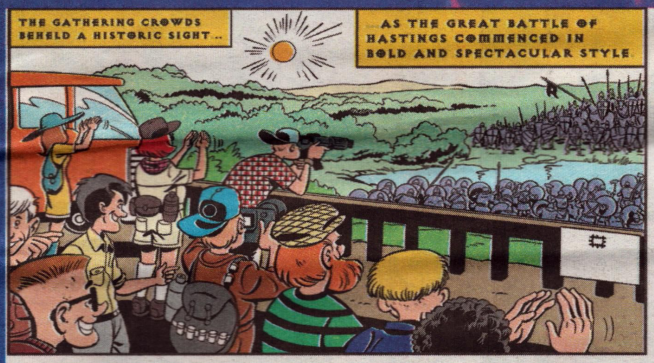
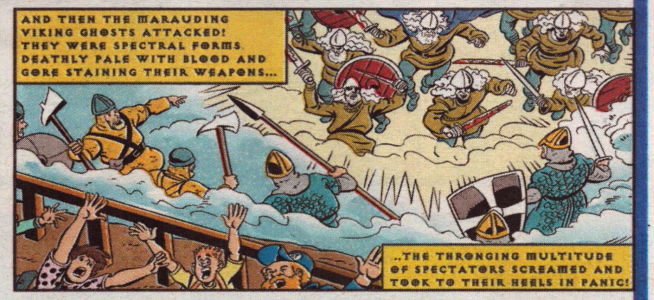
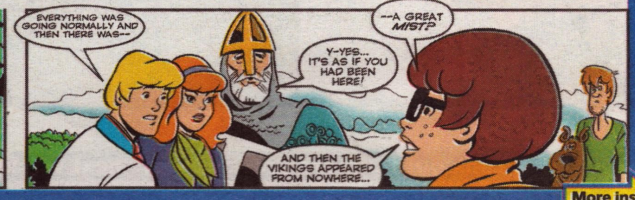
SCOOBY-DOO! in YIKES! IT'S THE VIKINGS!

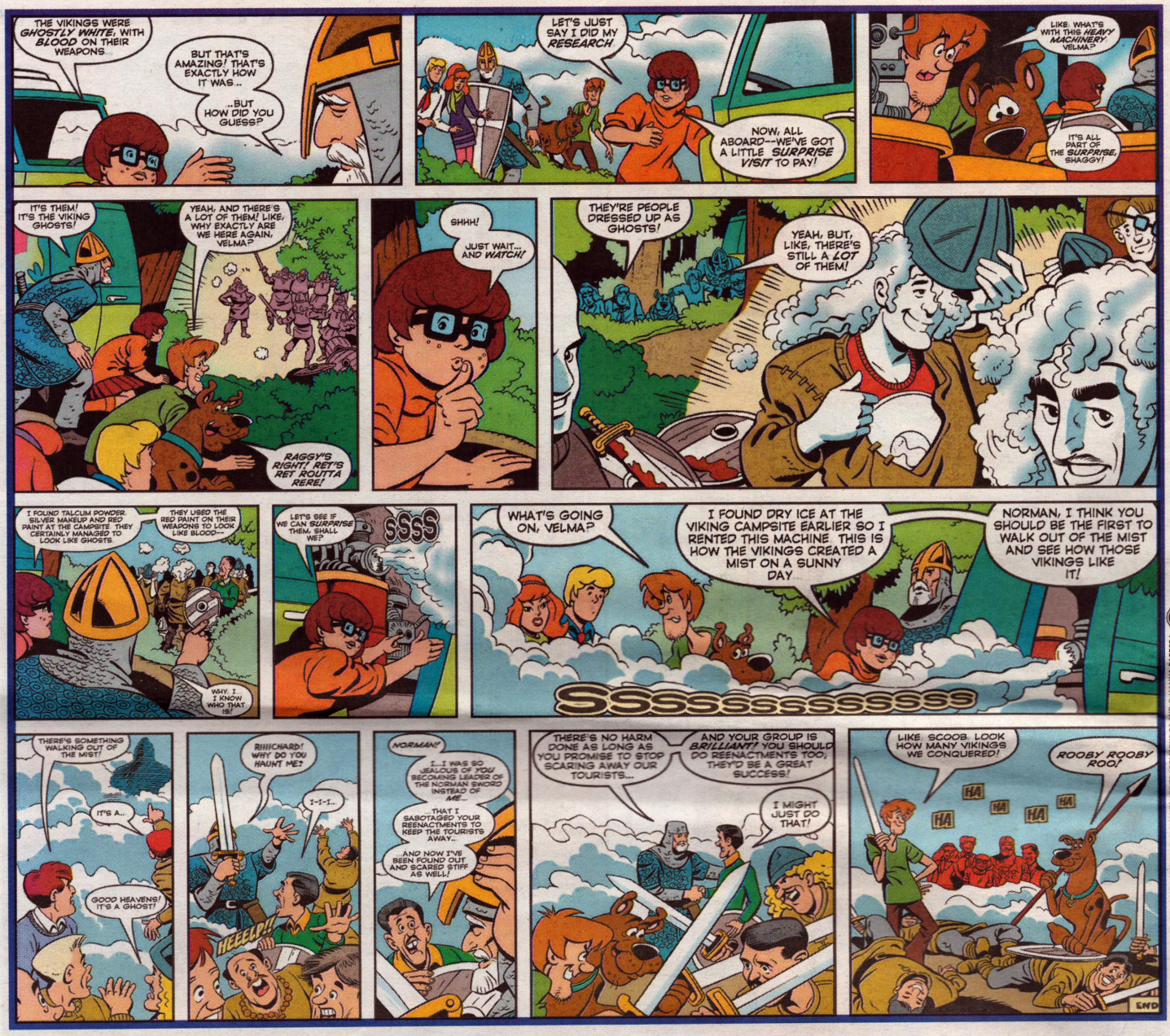
The story so far – The Norman Sword Society are trying to re-create the Battle of Hastings, but things aren't going to plan







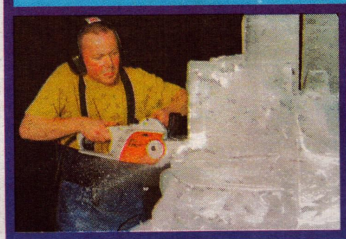
More inside



SCOOBY DOO AND ALL RELATED CHARACTERS AND ELEMENTS ARE TRADEMARKS OF AND © HANNA-BARBERA (S02)

HARRY POTTER'S COOLER THAN EVER!

Artist Jonathan Lloyd has created a detailed replica of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry sculpted entirely from ice. The amazing creation cost £1,800, took Jonathan 16 hours to complete and is made from 600 litres of water. The castle – complete with minarets, windows, doors and soaring towers – stands more than 1.2m high on a mountain carved from two huge blocks of ice.



The person who ordered the castle swore Jonathan to secrecy, because they want to stun guests with the icy centrepiece at a glittering party this week. At room temperature, the sculpture will last about eight hours before melting.

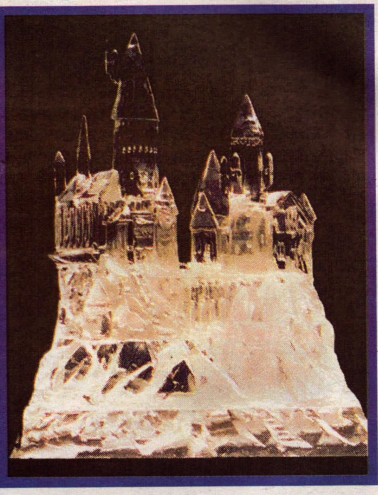
"I was asked if it was possible to do Hogwarts in ice and when I looked at the film poster I realised it was," said Jonathan, who has also created a life-sized Formula One racing car in ice for McLaren.

"The major components of Hogwarts are all there, the great hall, the turrets and the staircase leading up the mountain."

To stop his sculptures melting before they're ready, Jonathan works in a cold room that's kept at a constant -10C. The ice blocks are first cut using a chainsaw and then assembled into a rough shape, before they are modified with woodworking tools.

Delicate details such as minarets and buttresses are created from smaller ice blocks and then added to the main sculpture by melting their surfaces with an iron.

See today's News, opposite, for more cool ice creations!



PICTURES: LEWIS DURHAM/KENT NEWS & PICTURES

Look out for more Scooby capers next week!

FUNDAY

NEWS

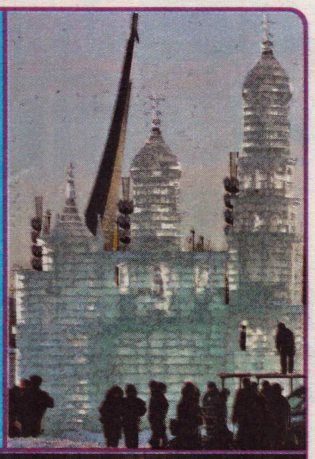
It's a roo rescue

The devastating bushfires around Sydney, Australia, have not just caused damage to people's homes, the country's unique wildlife has also been severely affected. This lucky wallaby was rescued and treated for smoke inhalation and burns but many other marsupials have not been so lucky. The fires, which have raged since Christmas Eve, have killed tens of thousands of animals, including deer, kangaroos, possums and koalas – the majority of which lived in the national parks to the west and south of Sydney. Nature groups say damage to wildlife could rival that of 1994 when 90% of the bush surrounding Sydney was destroyed.

PICTURES: REUTERS/DAVID GRAY, AP/DMITRY LOVETSKY/EYSTONE, MICHELE LIMINA

Ice sight

While most of us snuggle up indoors during the wintry weather, for others the freezing conditions provide an ideal chance to show off their cool craft. In Moscow, visitors to an annual exhibition of ice sculptures saw this 99m-tall towering creation [right], hacked out of huge ice blocks. It's a scale model of the Ivan The Great Bell Tower at the Moscow Kremlin. Meanwhile, in Switzerland, the opening of an international ice hockey tournament, in Davos, was marked by this sculpture [below] – depicting ice hockey players in action.

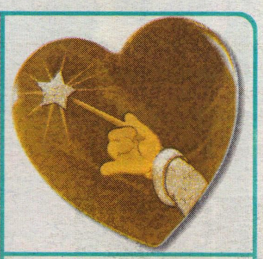


Driven potty

Not everyone is mad about Harry Potter since he made his appearance on the big screen ... some people are seething. In Austria, an anti-Harry Potter phoneline has even been launched on which callers can air their hatred of the bespectacled orphan wizard. The hotline's founder, Alois Gmeiner, plans to collect the angry muggles' gripes and publish them in a book. "It's the hype surrounding Harry Potter that gets on my nerves," storms Alois.

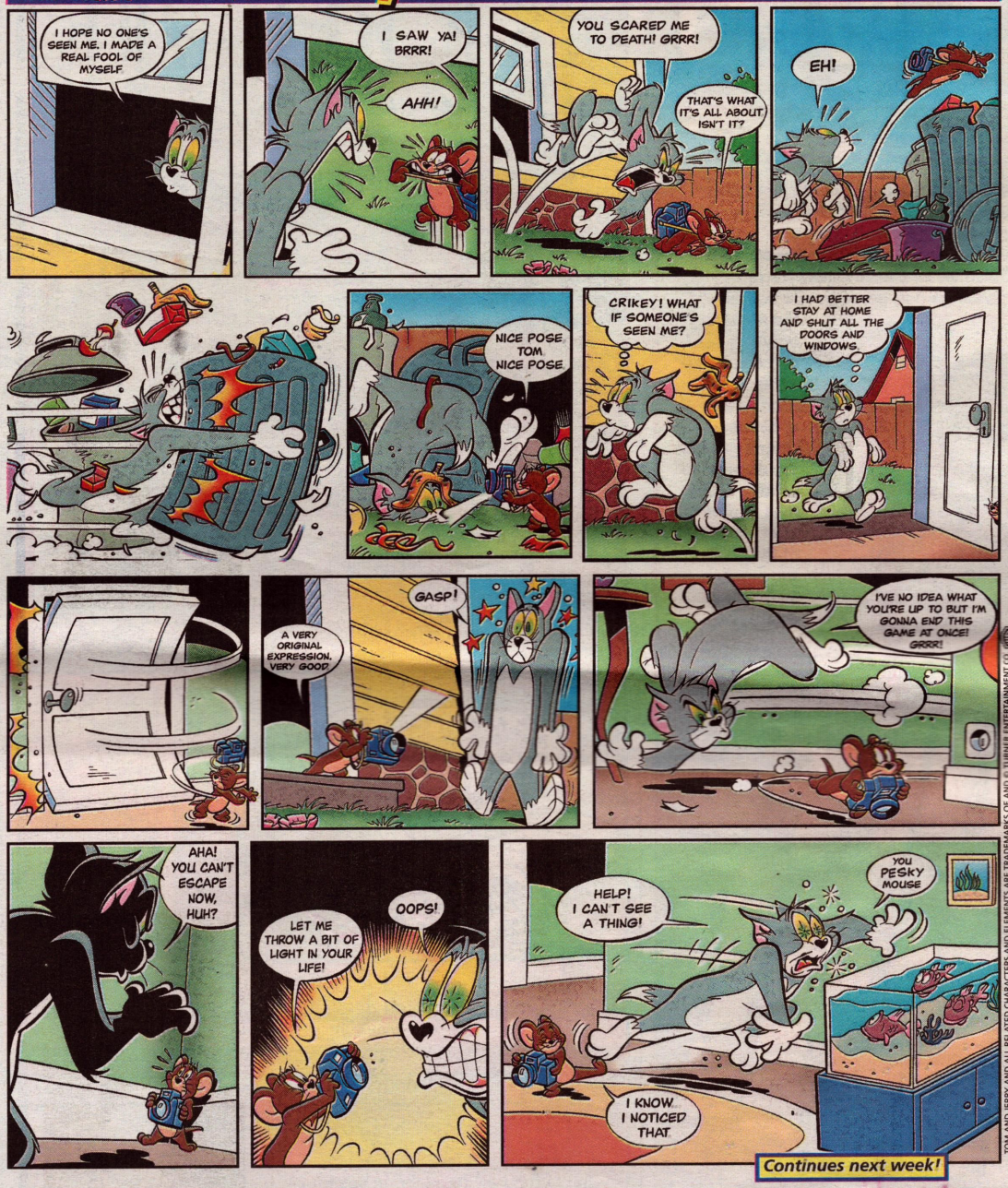
Heart of gold

What better way to celebrate Valentine's Day than by wearing your heart on your sleeve? Organisers of the Variety Club Gold Heart Day on February 14 aim to get everyone wearing a special gold heart pin to raise money for sick, disabled and disadvantaged children. On sale until March 10, the gold hearts cost just £1 and are available from Mothercare, WHSmith, Barclays, Safeway and Shell garages. The Variety Club, which supports individual children, schools, hospitals and youth organisations, has raised £23m since the first Gold Heart Day in 1991 – so, show you have the midas touch, too. For more information, click on the website www.varietyclub.org.uk



TOM AND JERRY SMILE, PLEASE

The story so far – Tom likes to think that he's the most popular cat on the block. But Jerry's got other ideas!



Continues next week!

TOM AND JERRY AND ALL RELATED CHARACTERS AND ELEMENTS ARE TRADEMARKS OF AND © TURNER ENTERTAINMENT CO. (S02)

DAGSY DOG

Woof, woof! Got any pet problems? Then get in touch with me at the address below!

I'm writing about my two fish – Silver and Tango. Tango keeps chasing Silver around the tank, touching him behind the tail. Why is he doing this?

Roisin Maguire, 9, Basingstoke

There are a number of reasons why fish chase each other and show aggression. Firstly, they could be different species that do not get on – check in a fish manual. Secondly, the one chasing may be exerting his dominance over the other. Also, if there is a disruption to the tank environment, like incorrect temperature, oxygen level or food supply, the fish being chased may be unwell. You should check these factors and if they are all okay, and the aggression continues, then you may need to separate the fish. If in doubt, consult your vet.

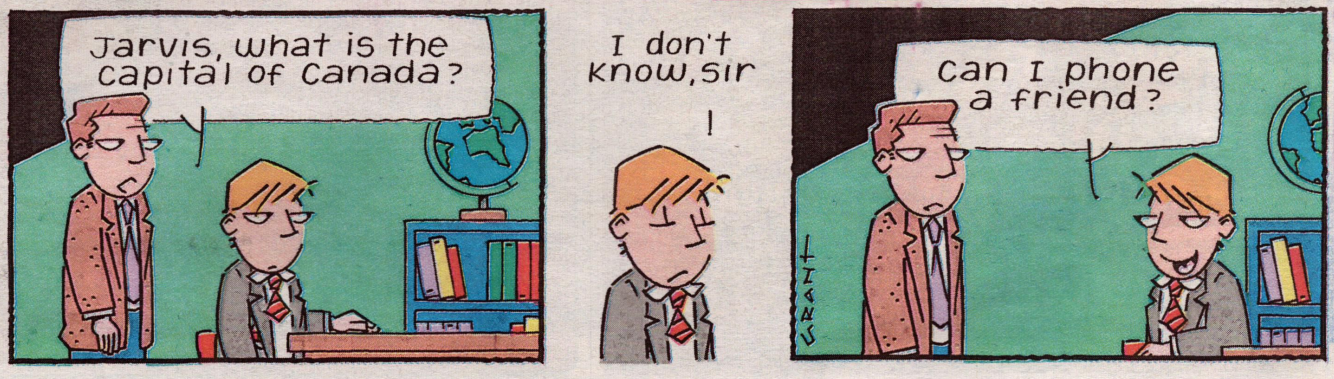
Advice by Blue Cross vet Mark Bossley

If you have a question for me or you want to send in a cool fact, write to:
The Funday Times, Dagsy Dog, PO Box 495, London E98 1ST
You can now e-mail your pet problems to
dagsy.dog@sunday-times.co.uk

The Blue Cross, one of Britain's oldest animal welfare charities, has four animal hospitals, 11 adoption centres, and two equine centres. Last year, the charity found homes for 8,000 animals and treated more than 60,000 pets at its hospitals.

ILLUSTRATIONS: PAUL CEMMICK

Jarvis



©KNIGHT FEATURES

Get your pet problems to Dagsy right away – his column will soon be taking a break!

OUR LAND OF MAKE BELIEVE

On the eve of the release of the their new single, The Land Of Make Believe, the allSTARS take us on a flight of fancy

Becky

What were you favourite daydreams when you were growing up?

Sandi: I had this fantasy that I owned a hotel. I imagined serving breakfast and working behind the reception desk.

Thaila: I used to imagine I could fly. I'd dream about that all the time, but I never got off the ground in real life.

Sandi

Ashley: Me too! I used to lie on my bed, close my eyes and dream I was flying. It was such a great feeling, especially when I dreamt I was going really fast and spinning around.

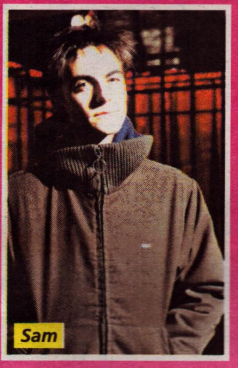
Sam: And me! I would imagine I was Superman. I had a blanket that I put over my shoulders like a cape, and I'd jump down the stairs.

Becky: I believed my teddy bears were alive but pretended they were just toys. Then when I went out of the room I believed they all came to life. You always lose things when you're a kid, but I don't actually think they're lost at all – I believe the teddy bears pinch them!

Where's the most dreamy place you've ever been?

Sandi: It was actually in Bath at Christmas. I was visiting a friend who was in panto there and it started snowing. We put on our hats and coats and just walked around in the snow – it was lovely.

Ashley: Mine was at Christmas, too. I went skiing in Switzerland and it was so nice because it was cold and snowy and everyone was out in the street celebrating. It felt like the friendliest place on earth.


Sam

Thaila: A place called Victoria Falls in Kenya, which was beautiful. After that I went on a safari, which was wonderful. It was nice to see animals living freely in all that space rather than being cooped up in a zoo.

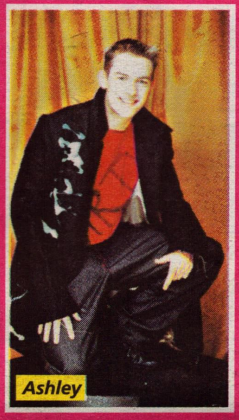
Sam: Walt Disney World in Florida is the most dreamy place on earth. I was seven when we went there and it was like being in a film.

Becky: I agree with Sam. Walt Disney World is so magical. Everything is so small and cute and there are lots of beautiful lights in all the trees.

What would be your ultimate make-believe day?

Ashley: I'd get up in the morning and race round a track in a rally car. Then I'd join the England football team and score a goal at Wembley. After that, I'd go scuba diving in the Bahamas, then I'd ski off a cliff and land in Britney Spears's arms.

Sam: Sorry mate, Britney's mine! My ultimate day would be to fly home to Britney. My mum would cook us a beautiful dinner and Britney and I would spend the rest of the day starring into each others' eyes.


Ashley

Becky: I'd get all my friends and family and take a trip to the moon. Then, when we got there, we'd play crazy golf with a special ball that wouldn't fly off into space.

Thaila: Oh I'd like to go into space, too. It'd be amazing to being able to float instead of being pulled down by gravity.

Sandi: I'd be a boy for a day and I'd play football. I'm amazed how boys always go out and play football, no matter how tired they are or how much they've eaten. And it'd be great not to have to do my make-up and hair for a day.

Which fairytale character would you say you are most like?

Sandi: Tinkerbell. She's soft and sweet and a bit wacky, and I like dressing up as a fairy too.

Sam: Well, I hope I'm like Peter Pan because he never grows old, he can fly, and he's got a gang of great mates.

Thaila: Probably Rapunzel at the moment, because I've got all this really long fake hair in today. If I could get anyone to climb up it and rescue me it'd be either Brad Pitt or Robbie Williams.

Becky: The Little Mermaid. Her dad wouldn't let her go on land and I felt a bit like her when I was too young to do all the stuff older girls did. So, I'd sit at home and sing songs from the film.

Ashley: Humpty Dumpty, because when I was little I used to accidentally break lots of things around the house but could never get them back together again. I also broke a few bones playing sport but I enjoyed that – it meant I got a plaster cast that my mates could sign.

Thaila

The allSTARS' new single, The Land Of Make Believe, is released tomorrow

ONCE UPON A TIME ...

The Land Of Make Believe was originally a number-one smash hit for 1980s pop group Bucks Fizz. The group, featuring Cheryl Baker [who went on to present CBBC's Record Breakers], Mike Nolan, Jay Aston and Bobby Gee, was put together for the 1981 Eurovision Song Contest. Their winning song, Making Your Mind Up, shot straight to the top of the charts and heralded the start of a glittering pop career that included 20 hit singles, three numbers ones and eight albums.

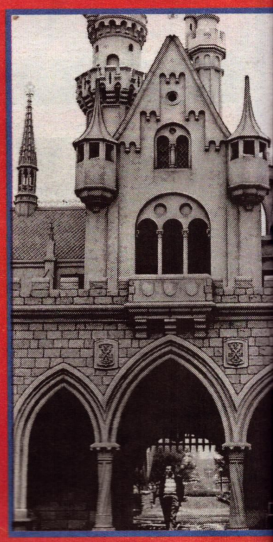
Bucks Fizz were the Steps of their day – each single was accompanied by another polished dance routine, new outfits and outrageous 1980s hairdos. The boys even whipped off the girls' long skirts in the Making Your Mind Up routine, to reveal mini skirts underneath!

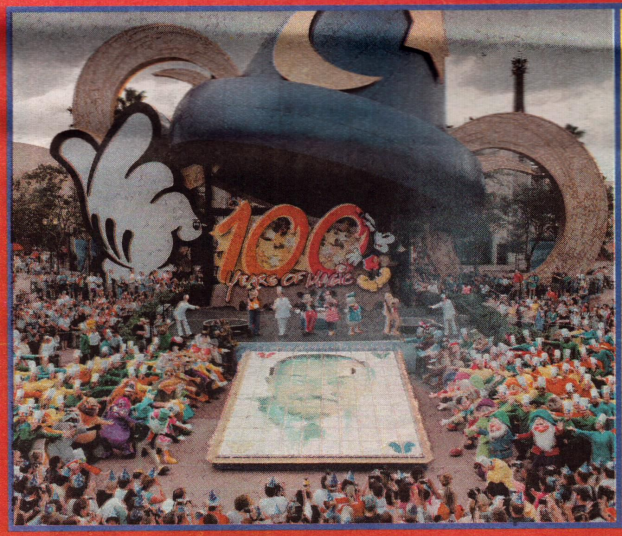
PICTURES: REX FEATURES LIMITED

CENTURY OF

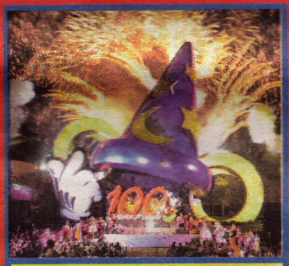
1 Walter Elias Disney was born in Chicago on December 5, 1901. Walt was interested in drawing and photography at school and went on to become an advertising cartoonist. In 1923 he moved to Hollywood with just $40 in his pocket, where he set about creating films with his brother Roy – and in 1928 Walt created Mickey Mouse.

2 Walt's quest was to perfect the art of animation, and in 1932 he won the first of his 32 personal Oscars with a film called Flowers And Trees. Though it was the release of Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs, the first full-length animated film, later that year, that changed Walt's fortunes forever. Over the five years that followed, the brothers' studio produced Pinocchio, Fantasia, Dumbo and Bambi. As the Disney brothers became increasingly famous, Walt often reminded people: "I only hope that we never lose sight of one thing – that it was all started by a mouse."



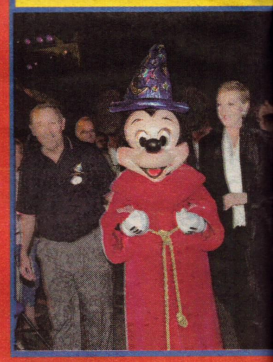


6 Walt's legacy continues today. The studio creates ground-breaking animated movies – like Toy Story, Atlantis and Beauty And The Beast. And not only does Walt Disney World include four theme parks and 30 hotels, there are also Disney resorts in Paris and Tokyo with Hong Kong Disneyland due in 2005.
On what would have been Walt's 100th birthday last month, this giant cake – with a portrait in icing – was produced by the bakers at Walt Disney World.

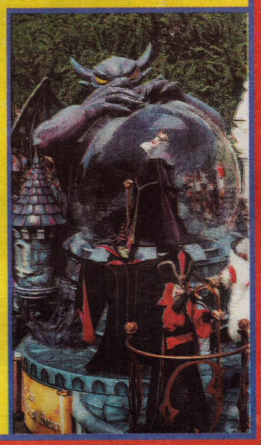


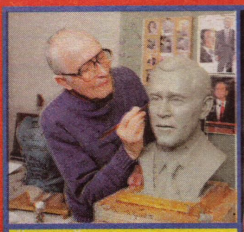
7 To mark the centenary, a year-long 100 Years Of Magic celebration has kicked off at Walt Disney World. New rides, parades, music and characters have been added to the theme parks – and the event was launched with this spectacular firework bonanza at Disney-MGM Studios.

8 Mickey Mouse pronounced the celebrations open, with the help of Walt's nephew, Roy E Disney, and the star of Disney's Mary Poppins and The Princess Diaries, Julie Andrews.

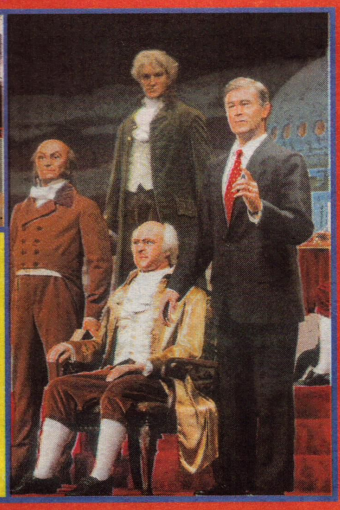


12 The magnificent 2.5m-high globes in which the characters stand are made from the acrylic material that's used in the windscreens of jet fighters. The material was heated in a forced-air oven, secured in a large ring, and blown up like an enormous soap bubble.

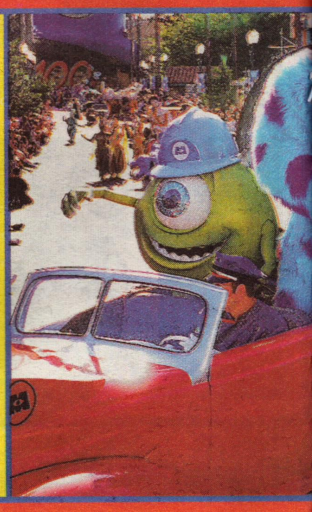




13 Walt Disney World's Hall Of Presidents was updated for the celebrations, to include 43rd American president George W Bush. The president's figure was sculpted by Disney veteran Blaine Gibson.



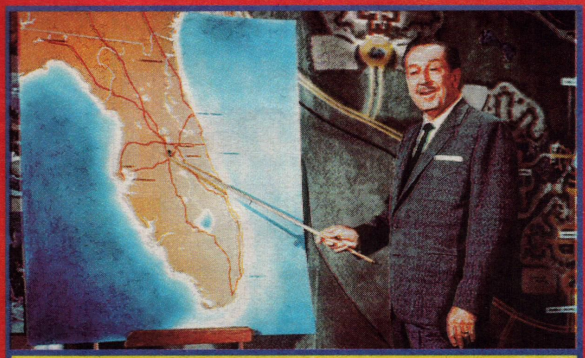
14 The new Stars And Motor Cars Parade at Disney-MGM Studio features Mike and Sulley from Monsters Inc. The 15 parade cars, dating from 1929 to 1951, have been restored to their original glory.



DREAMS

To mark the 100th anniversary of Walt Disney's birth, a 12-month party has just kicked off at Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. Dave Coombs takes a look at the man behind the magic – and what's in store for guests at the famous theme parks

3 While continuing to create animated movies, Walt set about building a fantasy kingdom in which guests could enter the magical worlds portrayed in the Disney films. "When I started on Disneyland, my wife used to say 'But why do you want to build an amusement park? They're so dirty.' I told her that was just the point – mine wouldn't be," Walt recalled, at the opening of Disneyland in California in 1955.



4 Disneyland was an instant hit, attracting visitors from all over the world, and it inspired Walt to dream up an even grander plan – initially known as the Florida Project. Having bought a 75km² plot of land in central Florida, Walt sketched out a world of entertainment that was to include a theme park, hotels and an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow [Epcot].

5 After more than seven years of planning and preparation, including 52 months of construction, the Florida Project – by then renamed Walt Disney World – opened to the public on October 1, 1971. Sadly, Walt never saw his grand plan realised – he died in 1966.

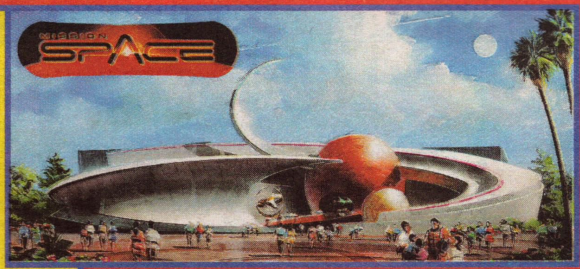
9 Visitors to Walt Disney World this year can buy these high-tech twinkling centenary pins that dazzle with coloured light when they're triggered by parades, firework displays and even rides.

10 Walt Disney was infatuated with parades, ever since he saw the circus parade come to town, as a child in Missouri. When Disneyland opened more than 40 years later, it had its own daily parade, and 2002 sees the launch of the Share A Dream Come True Parade in Florida. The parade music is played by members of Britain's Royal Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestras.

11 Featuring 100 characters, this parade of giant snowstorms depicts stories from classic Disney films. The snowstorm globes are air-conditioned, so that they don't steam up in the scorching Florida heat.

15 Also new at Walt Disney World is the chance for everyone to play Who Wants To Be A Millionaire. Unlike the TV version, even kids can take part in Who Wants To Be A Millionaire – Play It!, and although the prize isn't a million, you can win a holiday and cool gifts.

16 Walt once said: "Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world." And the same is true for the theme parks today. Coming next year to the Epcot Center in Florida is Mission: SPACE. This astronaut adventure will allow guests to experience simulated space flight, including take-off and even weightlessness!



100 YEARS OF MAGIC
Walt Disney World
THE FUNDAY TIMES

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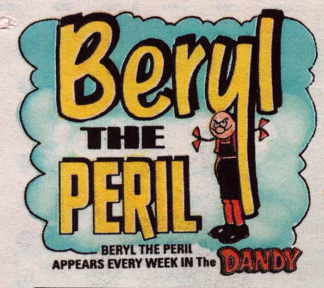
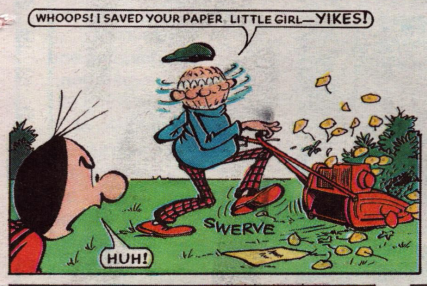
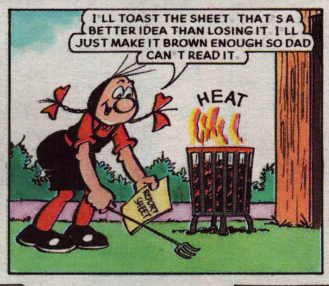
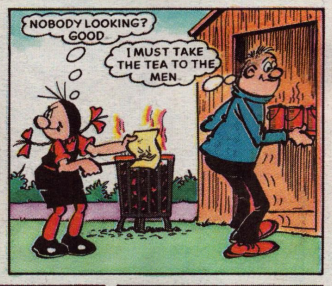
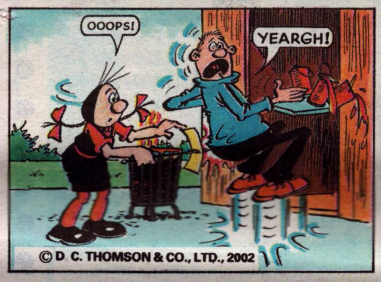
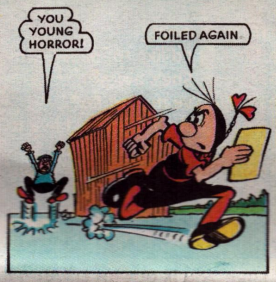


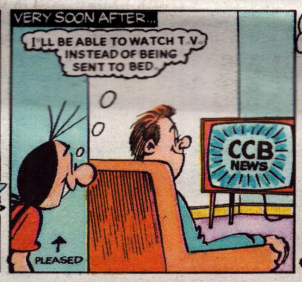


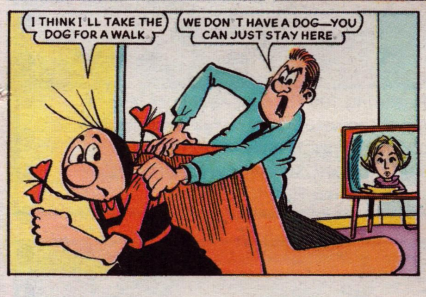


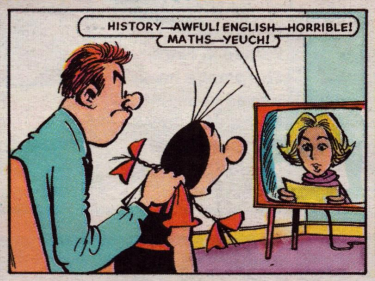




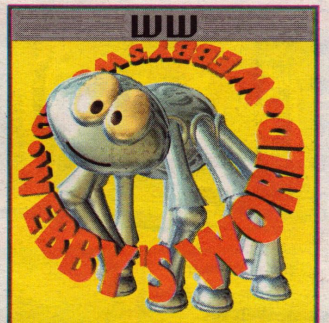








SORRY, VIEWERS, THE PICTURE HAS FAILED — JUST LIKE BERYL! NORMAL SERVICE WILL RESUME NEXT WEEK.

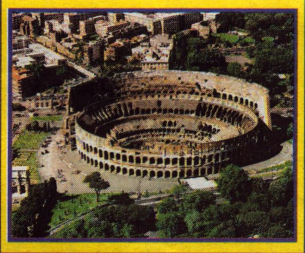


www.mtv.co.uk/dancingqueen

MTV celebrates the Queen's golden jubilee in its usual cheeky style. This right royal knees-up features the Queen, Prince Charles and Prince William getting down to the latest tracks. Just select a track, lighting, background screen and programme some moves – and then sit back and watch royalty rock. It's silly but fun!

www.what-is-the-capital-of.com

Caught out during your family Christmas quiz? Then brush up you knowledge of capital cities with this handy reference site. From Italy's capital Rome [below] to Bishkek [the capital of Kyrgyzstan!], log on and learn before testing your new-found knowledge with what-is-the-capital-of.com's geography quiz.



PICTURE: PA, REUTERS

If you are a webhead and have discovered a great site, or have created one of your own, spin me a mail and tell me all about it on webby@sunday-times.co.uk

FRESH!

REMNANTS: 01 THE MAYFLOWER PROJECT
by K A Applegate ★★★★★

K A "Animorphs" Applegate returns with another hip, sci-fi series – Remnants. In 2011, Earth will be destroyed by a meteorite and only a few lives will be saved via The Mayflower Project – a battered space shuttle set to flee the doomed planet. This first book in the series follows a group of teenagers who try to catch the flight. The book equivalent of a popcorn movie, Armageddon meets Dawson's Creek. Entertainment that won't strain your brain.

BOOK

WONKA GOLDEN TICKET BAR ★★★★★

This new chocolate bar, out now, claims to bring the magic of Charlie And The Chocolate Factory to life. Five bars include golden tickets – just like in the Roald Dahl book – and holders will win a trip to a chocolate factory in York, although it probably won't be quite as exciting as Charlie's Oompa-Loompa-packed adventure! The milk chocolate, itself is of the bubbly, velvet type but it doesn't explode, come in a bizarre colour or change flavour. Mr Wonka would probably demand more!

SNACK

REZ ★★★★★

Rez – it's a strange name and it's one really strange but visually-stunning game. Rez is best described as a bizarre cross between a shoot 'em up and a computer-generated music video. You are a humanoid who travels through a futuristic 3-D landscape, shooting alien crafts [think of an updated version of the 1980s Disney film, Tron]. Each time you fire or blast an alien you add another beat or rhythm to the dance track until you have a full-on trance tune! Weird, but strangely alluring. Rez-olution!

DREAMCAST

FUNDAY

BUZZ!

CATCH UP WITH KACI

Hi Kaci, have you been busy recently?
Yes, I've done a zillion things. I went on a tour of all the radio stations in the US. I toured with O Town, which was great – they're really nice guys. Then I sang at the Superbowl football match in front of 80,000 people. And then I did the Smash Hits roadshow.

Have you had any mishaps along the way?
Something really embarrassing happened on the O Town tour. I was on stage singing and my top came undone. Fortunately one of my dancers grabbed hold of it before it fell down. I managed to tie it back on while singing and dancing at the same time, which was a bit tricky!

Why have you chosen to cover 1970s hit I Think I Love You?
Because it's such a great pop song. Of course I wasn't alive when the Partridge Family sang it in 1971, but my mum was. She thinks I've done a good job of updating it.

Tell us about the video.
Oh, it's cute. It's about me being a huge fan of a pop singer and I sneak onto the set of his new video. I end up popping into the wardrobe department, putting on a disguise and being mistaken for one of the extras. It's very funny.

Is there anyone you'd go that far to meet?
I don't think I'd ever go that far, but I'd like to meet Celine Dion. She's my favourite singer. I'd also love to meet Jennifer Lopez. She's awesome.

Who's the most exciting person you've met so far?
Goodness, I've met lots of great people. I think I'd have to say Ricky Martin. He was so sweet and charming. He's cute, too.

Your new single and the last one, Tu Amour, are all about love. Are you trying to tell us something?
Well, I'm not in love, if that's what you mean. Most songs are about love, aren't they? But I'm single and I like it that way. I'm too busy to have a boyfriend.

I Think I Love You is out on London Records tomorrow

BOMFUNKS ARE BACK!

Their fans are called B-Boys and Fly-Girls. They call themselves B.O.W. and DJ Gismo, but they say they aren't sure why. And there's a third member of the group with the equally strange name of JS16, but he prefers to remain hidden in the studio. Welcome to the weird world of Finland's Bomfunk MCs.

The Bomfunks had a massive hit with Freestyler last year and now they're back with a catchy single called Super Electric.

B.O.W [real name Raymond] says Freestyler's success has made them rich but adds: "I'm not really into buying lots of stuff. I'm hoping to buy a house, but that's all." And he doesn't get fed up with hearing the group's tune as a ringtone on people's mobile phones. "I hear the sound of money coming in whenever I hear it," he chuckles.

DJ Gismo and Raymond

DJ Gismo [real name Ismo], plays the dance grooves behind Raymond's raps, and JS16 [real name Jaakko], produces the songs but never joins them on stage. "Not everyone enjoys being in the limelight," Raymond says. "I like it, but Bomfunk fans are much more interested in our music than our private lives."

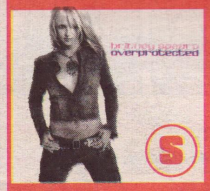
Super Electric is out tomorrow on INCredible Records.

T TV
S Single

HOT!

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE a1 ★★★★★

When bands announce they're embarking on a "change of direction", it's usually bad news for fans. So, when a1 told Funday last year that their next single would be completely different from everything that had gone before, we were a bit concerned. But, as soon as the lads played us this new track we realised that our fears were unfounded. Caught In The Middle is possibly the best single of a1's career, and that's no mean feat. The lads look destined to sit atop the pop charts later this month – and with a catchy, well-written track like this, they deserve it.



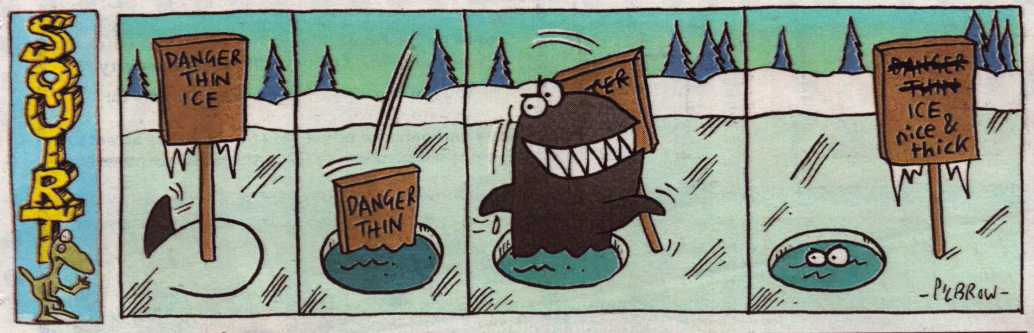
OVERPROTECTED BRITNEY SPEARS ★★★★☆

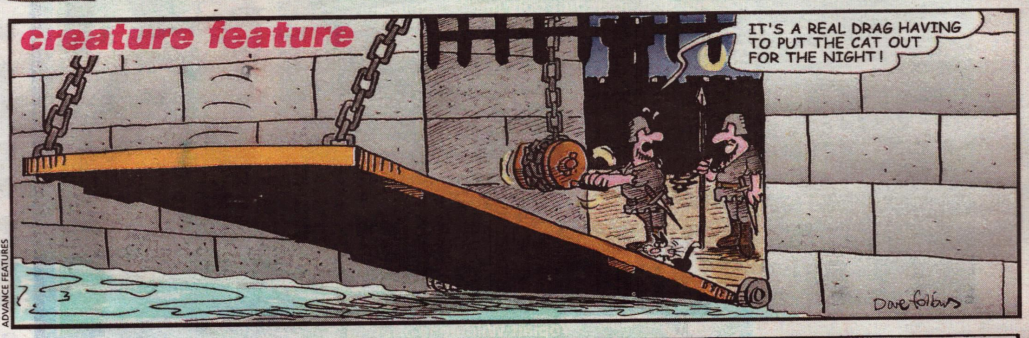
Britney's turning up the tempo with this, the second release from the Britney album. While I'm A Slave 4 U was a bit of a cranky track, Overprotected sees Britney back on top form, belting out a pop tune that everyone can sing along to. Britney sounds like she's putting her heart and soul into this song about controlling grown-ups but – with a showbiz career that began when she was eight, a hunky celeb boyfriend and millions in the bank – it's tricky to see how Britney's life has been that overprotected. Sounds to us like she's having a ball!

JACKIE CHAN ADVENTURES

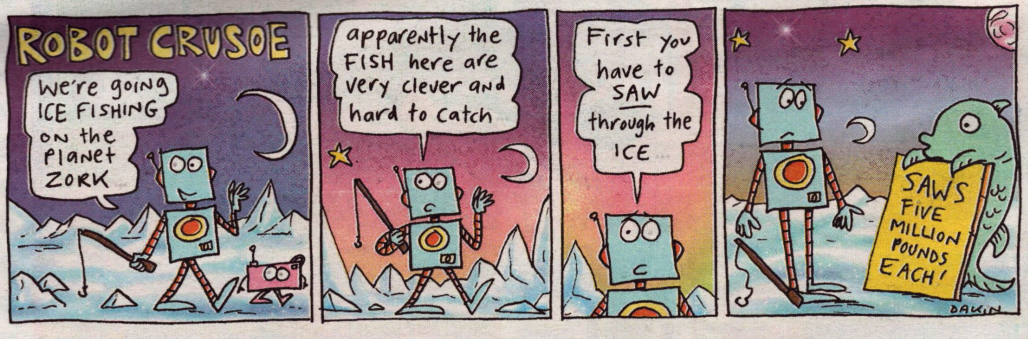
If you want to catch the freshest episodes of Jackie Chan Adventures, then check out Fox Kids this month. As well as 29 new episodes of martial arts mayhem in January, Chan fans can enjoy a Jackie jamboree during February half term, when Fox Kids will screen the remaining ten instalments. The new episodes continue the adventures of Jackie and his team from Section 13 as they battle The Dark Hand organisation. Prepare yourself for cool martial arts moves, plus lashings of laughs.

Buzz! bounces back next week





ADVANCE FEATURES



NEXT WEEK

PICTURE CHANNEL 5

We go behind the scenes on Channel 5's fantastic new American high school drama with Tammy Lynn Michaels

Grab the popcorn! We've got a scorching preview of the hottest movies coming your way in 2002

Find out why giant hissing cockroaches are the latest attraction

f-mail

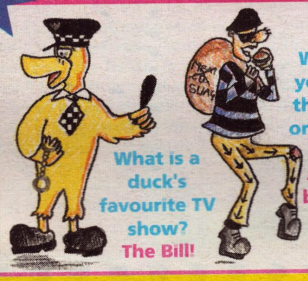
Send your letters, cartoons, jokes and drawings to: The Funday Times, PO Box 5073, Leighton Buzzard LU7 7GX Send your e-mail to: funday.times@sunday-times.co.uk

RAY FUN

Rayman 2: Forever is the handheld version of Rayman 2, for the Game Boy Color.
The helicopter-haired hero is in flying form for the latest gaming adventure. The alien comes across new objects, enemies and friends in 13 universes and 36 exclusive levels of gameplay, set in Rayman's colourful universe.
Ubi Soft has joined forces with Funday to give the writer of the star f-mail a Game Boy Color console and a copy of Rayman 2: Forever.
The other f-mailers will receive a goody bag containing a T-shirt, watch, figurine, pen and bouncy ball.

STAR

Dear f-mail,
Here are some jokes I have illustrated.
Anna Meldrum, 12, Ayr



Dear f-mail,
I am replying to Ryan Fuller's letter complaining about the Harry Potter film [issue 641]. Generally, I thought the film was extremely good. Even though some bits were missed out, most of the important bits were kept in. I wished that it could have been a bit longer but I understand that it is a children's film and younger kids probably wouldn't be able to stay still for much longer. The quidditch scene [as most people agree] was fantastic! I was a bit disappointed that the ghost Peeves and the the other ghosts were not included [except in the great hall]. Overall I thought the film was brilliant and I give it 9 out of 10. I think it is a great success.
Lara Ryde, 10, East Sussex

FUNDAY

WIN IT!

COMPETITION ADDRESS Send answers to all competitions to us at: The Funday Times, PO Box 5073, Leighton Buzzard LU95 1AY. Competition deadline: January 23

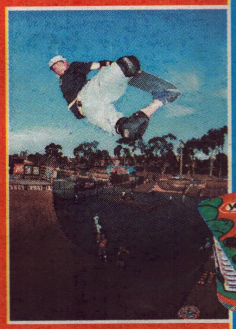
You can e-mail your competition answers to: funday.comps@sunday-times.co.uk
Sorry, but only one e-mail per entrant will be accepted.

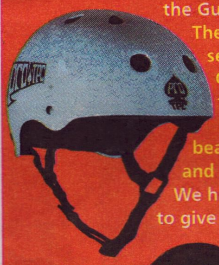
ROCK THE PARKS

With more than 25 years in the skateboard business, the experts at Kryptonics USA know what makes a mean board and the company's new range really rocks!

The new Rock series of skateboards consists of three models [worth £75 each]: the Frontman, the Guitar and the Drummer. The decks are made from seven-ply rock hard Canadian maple and are fitted with Kryptonic 56mm wheels and ABEC 5 bearings. Great for grinding and awesome for ollies!

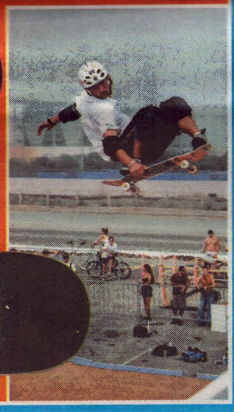
We have 15 sets of skateboards and Protec EPS Helmets to give away.





To enter, name the famous frontman of Limp Bizkit.

Mark your entry SKATE and send it with your name, age and address, to the competition address above.



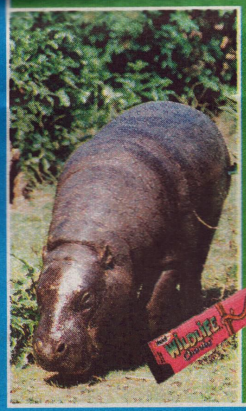
HAVE A HIPPO

Yoplait Wildlife not only makes yummy yogurts and funky fromage frais – such as the YO-TO-GO and the Wildlife Choobs – but the dessert maker is crazy about animal conservation, too.

In fact, Yoplait Wildlife donates money [more than £250,000 so far] to London Zoo's Conservation In Action scheme for every pack of yogurt and fromage frais sold.

To highlight its involvement, Yoplait Wildlife is offering one Funday reader a year's adoption of a pygmy hippopotamus at London Zoo, including a certificate, photo, a year's subscription to London Zoo's Lifewatch magazine and a place on one of the "thank you" boards at the world-famous zoo.

The prize also includes family travel and entry to the zoo so the winner can say hi to their hippo!

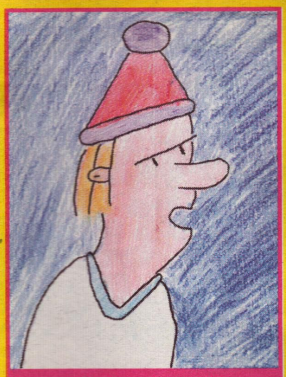


To enter, tell us the literal translation of the latin word hippopotamus.

Mark your entry HIPPO and send it with your name, age and address to the competition address above.

The tickets must be taken by June 2002

Normal TNL competition rules apply to all Funday Times competitions



Laura Hitchcock, 9, Hillesley

Dear f-mail,
Yesterday, I went to see The Lord of the Rings, and it was absolutely fantastic! It was really exciting, and it had superb special effects of all the evil creatures. I thought that Elijah Wood [who plays Frodo Baggins] was brilliant, and he made me nearly cry when Gandolf, the good, mighty wizard disappeared, because he looked so unhappy and miserable. I think that anyone who likes adventure and magic should go and see it – they'll love it! Although I am a great Harry Potter fan, I think that The Lord of The Rings is better. Does anyone agree with me?
Sabrinda Norris, 11, Hampshire

Amy Murphy, Sandymount

Dear f-mail,
I agree with Ryan Fuller [issue 641]. The Harry Potter movie was only really enjoyable if you had not read the book. They left out nearly a quarter of the story. For example, Ron was not supposed to go for detention in the Forbidden Forest, Neville was. They never brought Baby Norbet the dragon up to the tallest tower, etc etc etc.
Catherine O' Keeffe, Co Galway

FUNDAY SPORT

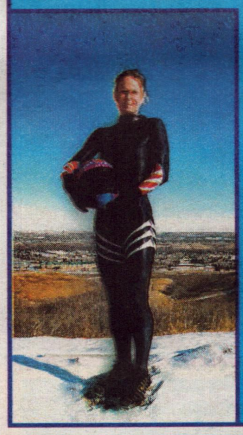
ALEX COOMBER

Funday Sport meets Alex Coomber – Britain's gold-medal hope at next month's Winter Olympics in Salt Lake, America. The 28-year-old will be competing in the skeleton – a solo bobsleigh capable of breakneck speeds!

How do you describe the feeling of hurtling along on a skeleton?
Imagine going headfirst on a skateboard that's attached to a car going along a motorway! We reach speeds of about 130kph. It's strange, but the faster you go the slower it feels as your brain can't take everything in.

Do you get scared?
Yes, most of the time. I think you have to be to be at your best. It's a case of being scared of not producing a good performance rather than any physical injury, though.

How did you discover the sport?
I went on a week's bobsleigh course in 1997 in Igls, Austria. We went halfway down the track for a race and I won. The next week I was selected for the British team. Now, in between courses at work, I compete in the world cup. You have five rounds all around the world and I'm leading this season at the moment.



Every 100th of a second is vital in the skeleton, so how do you practise to increase your speed?
Basically you need a good aerodynamic body position, with your head and shoulders down and your arms and legs in. It's hard to do when you are getting thrown around at high speed. Anticipating when to steer before you get to the bends is important too.

Is your all-in-one suit important?
That as well. We have a saying: "skin to win". Wearing two elbow pads, instead of one, can cost you a 500th of a second.

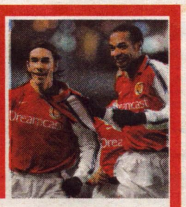
Who are your main rivals?
Maya Pedersen who is Swiss, Katerina Mironova from Russia and Steffi Hanzlik from Germany. I think in my first year they were quite shocked and tried to get me disqualified. I think they thought no one from Britain should be good at this sport. Now they take me a lot more seriously.

Have you been able to practise at Salt Lake?
We have had two world cup runs there. It's very fast. It's also a new track, only four years old, so the high-tech bends were specially designed for the best speeds and the spectators. All runs are very different though. Salt Lake is a very technical run, full of subtle bends that are hard to steer, but it's also got bigger bends too that leave you fighting against the G-forces.

You are Britain's best hope for a Winter Olympic gold – are you excited about it?
I do think about it. I am the best hope for a British gold medal, but that's what it is, a hope. There's no getting away from it. But there are things that are out of my control and all I can do is concentrate on what I'm doing.

SPORT NEWS

Funday picks out the best of this week's sporting action



Today Premiership, Arsenal v Liverpool

With Leeds and Manchester United both in championship-winning form, this game between two other likely title contenders takes on increased importance. Liverpool's recent results have been poor, while Arsenal's Thierry Henry and Robert Pires will want to continue the Gunners' winning run.
Live on Sky Sports 1 from 3pm.

Monday Australian Open, Melbourne

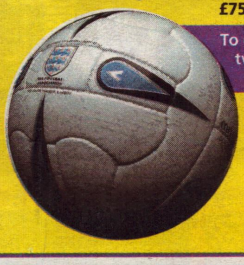
The year's first grand slam event on the tennis tour will be in the glorious sunshine of Melbourne Park. After a return from injury, Anna Kournikova could be making headlines with her tennis, rather than her looks, after reaching the semi-finals of the recent Auckland Classic tournament.
Live coverage on Eurosport.

MIGHTY MITRE

You will have seen it bursting the back of the net in the FA Cup and now, thanks to Mitre, you can have one of your own!

The new 26-panel ISO Final ball is so fast that it has recorded bar-breaking speeds of up to 180kph. Plus, with its improved accuracy, your hot shots won't just be quick, they'll be on target!

Mitre has given us 10 ISO Final balls [worth £75 each] to give away.



To enter, tell us who scored two goals in last season's FA Cup final.

Mark your entry MITRE and send it, with your name, age and address, to the competition address on page 11.

mitre

PICTURES: AFP/ANDREW CORNAGA, EPA/ADRIAN DENNIS, SIMON WILKINSON

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